

Delaware Sea Level Rise Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
June 16, 2011
(Approved July 28, 2011)

Materials Distributed:

Agenda

Draft summary of May meeting

Draft Process Agenda for Public Engagement Sessions

*all materials distributed will be available online:

<http://www.swc.dnrec.delaware.gov/coastal/Pages/DESLRAdvisoryCommittee.aspx>

Follow Up Items:

1. DCP will provide a rough plan for subject matter expert involvement for the July meeting
2. Advisory Committee members will provide names and contact information for subject matter experts to be invited to focus groups.

Key Discussion Points:

Old Business

The draft summary of the May 19, 2011 meeting was approved as written.

Public Engagement Subcommittee Recommendations

At the May meeting, an ad-hoc subcommittee was formed to provide recommendations for public outreach and engagement to the Advisory Committee. John Taylor chaired the committee, whose members included Sarah Cooksey, Rich Collins, Michael Kirkpatrick and Chad Tolman.

John Taylor provided a report from the ad-hoc committee and recommendations. The goal of public engagement is to inform the public about the causes and impacts of sea level rise, the process that the Advisory Committee is taking, and to obtain public feedback. The ad-hoc committee determined that three public meetings should be held, one in each county, sometime in late August/early September. The meetings will follow the DelDot meeting model, held from 4-8p.m. as an open house style meeting. Stations will be set up for participants to view sea level rise projections and exposures. Each station will be staffed, so that participants can ask questions and provide comments/suggestions. Two presentations will be given per meeting. One at the beginning and then repeated halfway through the meeting.

John emphasized that the purpose of these meetings is not to argue about sea level rise or why the Advisory Committee exists but to inform the public of the findings and to receive comments and feedback.

To notify the public about the meetings, ads will be placed in local newspapers, social media will be utilized, and direct mailing may be a possibility.

Several committee members suggested that the public engagement sessions be held in September, rather than August, to avoid vacations and start of school. There was general agreement on this point.

Brenna Goggin, Delaware Nature Society, shared with the committee that her organization was also planning to hold a sea level rise forum sometime in September. Coordination and sharing of resources between the two efforts was encouraged and Sarah Cooksey offered assistance from the Delaware Coastal Programs.

Mike Kirkpatrick motioned that the public engagement recommendations be approved by the Advisory Committee. The recommendations were approved unanimously.

Subject Matter Expert/Stakeholder Engagement

Susan Love, Delaware Coastal Programs, followed up on a discussion from the May meeting when the concept of a large “stakeholder” workshop was introduced. At the May meeting, there was discussion about the purpose of the workshop, who “stakeholders” were and whether the public would be invited or allowed to participate. The ad-hoc committee for public engagement was formed as a result of this discussion, but involvement of “subject matter experts” and other stakeholders has not yet been addressed, though there has been agreement among members of the group that additional expertise is highly desirable.

Susan explained that based on conversations with both the ad-hoc committee and several Advisory Committee members, the large workshop envisioned for October may not be the best way to move forward. Although no specific recommendations were made, the public engagement ad-hoc subcommittee expressed a desire to hold smaller focus groups to address specific subject matter experts. The focus groups will give the Advisory Committee more flexibility, will allow more specific focus for meetings, and would save money for renting space.

Sarah Cooksey added that this method will require more resources from the Delaware Coastal Programs staff due to additional scheduling. Sarah also asked for Committee members to recommend people who should be involved in the focus groups to Susan. A committee member suggested that the recommendation of experts should be an assignment for the entire Advisory Committee. Committee members agreed to provide names of subject matter experts that should be consulted by the July meeting.

Workgroup Updates

Tricia Arndt, Delaware Coastal Programs, reported that the natural resource workgroup members have completed filling out all templates for their resources. The group is now in the editing /revising phase and a finalized draft document should be completed on schedule.

Bob Scarborough, Delaware Coastal Programs, reported that the infrastructure and public safety workgroup have identified 50 resources. All templates have been filled out but are in need of some modification. Detailed information will be added to the templates in the coming weeks. The group also has goal statements that the workgroup will discuss later.

Susan Love, Delaware Coastal Programs, reported that Delaware Coastal Programs staff has filled out all templates from the comments gathered from the socio/economic workgroup members. The University of Delaware is still in the process of gathering some economic data. When completed, economic and demographic data will be added to the appropriate templates.

The templates that the workgroups have used for the assessment are slightly different. The compiled draft document will be standardized after consultation with workgroups.

Remarks by DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Secretary Collin O'Mara thanked everyone for all of the work the Advisory Committee has accomplished. The committee has been tasked with holding tough conversations on the critical issue of sea level rise, however; these conversations are needed so that the investments the State makes today are still considered sound investments in the future. He also said that policy makers need to take projected increases in storm intensity into account in addition to sea level rise. Secretary O'Mara stated that the Advisory Committee promotes public policy that is based on sound science.

New Business

Sea Level Rise Adaptation Options Overview

Dave Carter, Delaware Coastal Programs, gave a presentation to begin moving the Advisory Committee discussions beyond exposure to sea level rise to how the group will address adaptation. Dave explained the three different types of adaptation (normal and background adaptation, deliberate adaptation, and mal-adaptation) and showed that the adaptation begins with normal and background adaptation but will eventually need to move into deliberate adaptation. Scientific understanding is always changing and the State needs to adapt and adjust our methods. The presentation will be available for download from the Sea Level Rise Advisory Committee website.

Many committee members enjoyed the presentation and felt that the site examples from Delaware should continue to be used for future presentations.

One member suggested that the financial cost for each adaptation option should be included. Dave responded that the financial cost may be difficult to estimate because of differences in individual site specifications, however pilot programs are currently being developed. Sarah Cooksey added that determining the financial cost may be considered a recommendation in the future.

A committee member expressed concern that not enough emphasis was placed on personal responsibility and recommended that future presentations include a section about accepting risk. If a person wants to buy land in a high risk area they should be able to do so without government involvement. There was a brief discussion about what the appropriate role of government would be when persons choosing to live in a high risk area later asked for government assistance to continue living there, or move. Dave suggested that a strategy might be to develop legislation in Delaware like the Federal Coastal Barrier Resources Act (which prohibits federal funds from being used for new development in high hazard barrier island areas) and there was agreement to discuss this further.

There was a suggestion to include a map of the shoreline and assessment of historic shoreline change in the presentation/document to show historic and recent shorelines.

A committee member added that all adaptation strategies will cost money however the investment may be worthwhile. Another member asked who will be making the investment the government? Secretary O'Mara answered that a full cost/benefit analysis will need to be completed before any state investment is made.

A member suggested that while it is important to have long-term objectives concerning sea level rise, the Advisory Committee should also develop short-term objectives because we cannot confidently predict what the rate of sea level rise will be in the future.

Public Comment

Peggy Shultz, League of Women Voters, recommended that the committee should develop a list of legal issues that may result from the vulnerability assessment and have a legal expert address these issues and answer question the Advisory Committee may have. Dave Carter responded that legal issues are being considered and that a section will be added to the final document. Sarah Cooksey added that Ms. Shultz's recommendation will be taken into consideration.

John Nicols asked how the committee could propose the closing of Port Mahon Road (in reference to a slide in Dave Carter's presentation). Dave Carter responded that the road is actually not a necessity to the company located on the road and that it is only used for convenience. Mr. Nicols requested that an economic cost/benefit analysis of Port Mahon be conducted before any decision is made. Mr. Nicols also expressed a concern that the vulnerability assessment is turning into an anti-development policy.

Hilary Stevens, University of Delaware, raised the point that the Advisory Committee cannot overlook environmental justice issues. Some people live along the coast because that is all they can afford. Ms. Stevens stated that there needs to be a differentiation between people who have second homes along the coast from the people who live in low lying areas out of necessity.

Request to Record Meeting Update

After the public comment period, Sarah Cooksey updated the committee on the cost of videotaping, as promised at the last meeting.

- Videotaping equipment: \$700-800
- Staff hiring process: \$800
- Staff time: \$800
- Total cost for 6-8 meetings: \$2400-2500

Sarah explained that the State of Delaware currently has a hiring cap and a cap on expenditures so the Advisory Committee does not have the money to hire someone to videotape meetings. Mr. Nichols responded that he is willing to provide the funding for videotaping, whatever the cost. Sarah answered that she must make sure that accepting funds from the public is legal and that the Advisory Committee cannot commit at this time.

Dave Carter suggested that he could get a contractual estimate if Mr. Nichols is willing to pay for the cost of videotaping.

One committee member stated that he may be able to find a volunteer to help with the videotaping.

Other members reminded the committee that they had already voted in favor of allowing videotaping of meetings by any interested person and that hiring someone to videotape is not the responsibility of the Advisory Committee (see revised ground rules and meeting summary from May 19 meeting).

Adjournment

After the meeting was adjourned, members of the Committee met in thematic workgroups- Society and Economy, Infrastructure and Public Safety, and Natural Resources.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Sea Level Rise Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday, July 28th.

Attendees:

Jennifer Adkins, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary
Tricia Arndt, DE Coastal Programs
Chris Bason, Center for Inland Bays
Karen Bennett, DNREC
Dave Carter, DE Coastal Programs
Richard Collins, Positive Growth Alliance
Sarah Cooksey, DE Coastal Programs
Robert Coxe, DNREC
Barbara DeHaven, DE Economic Development Office
Morgan Ellis, DE Energy Office
Amanda Fisher, Wesley College
Brenna Goggin, DE Nature Society
Susan Guiteras, U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Quinton Johnson, Del. General Assembly House of Representatives
Roger Jones, the Nature Conservancy
Karl Kalbacher, New Castle County
Jim Kirkbride, Wilmington resident
Michael Kirkpatrick, DE Dept. of Transportation

Don Knox, Del. Emergency Management Agency
Nancy Lawson, Pickering Reach resident
John Laznik, University of DE
Victor Lentonoff, Lewis Town Council
Susan Love, DE Coastal Programs
John Nichols, Middletown resident
Richard Perkins, DE Division of Public Health
Mike Powell, DNREC
Gene Reed, DOI
Kurt Reuther, Delaware Dept. of Safety and Homeland Security
Bob Scarborough, DE Coastal Programs
Susan Love, DE Coastal Programs
Peggy Shultz, DE League of Women Voters
Chris Sommerfield, University of DE
Hillary Stevens, University of DE
John Taylor, DE Chamber of Commerce
Chad Tolman, DE League of Women Voters
Robin Tyler, DNREC
Kelly Valencik, DE Coastal Programs
Greg Williams, DNREC
Mark Wolanski, DE Coastal Programs

